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THE EMPLOYMENT OF DISABLED SERVICE MEN

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Illustrated feature stories on the re-education of the wounded soldiers and sailors usually describe mechanical and human miracles. Such presentations of the subject cause us to think that there is an enormous task ahead of us in making, by mechanical means, whole men out of little more than remnants. To accept this as indicative of the problem of re-education is to warp the judgment and misdirect the general endeavor. At the outset, let it be understood that the causes of military disability are, to the extent of at least 50 per cent, of a medical nature. A disabled soldier or sailor is not necessarily a man without legs or arms.

Ninety per cent of all returned wounded men go back to their old jobs. With them the employment problem is simple. Only ten per cent have to be re-educated. Undoubtedly many more men are injured annually in American industries than we may expect in a year's war. Seventy per cent of all men injured in war or peace never had a trade. Consequently the teaching of any trade or any kind of machine operations to this seventy per cent gives them better incomes and easier work than their former occupations. To the extent of over ninety per cent re-education is nothing more than common, ordinary industrial education—in established industrial schools, in day, continuation, and night classes, and in factories when the crippled man is so nearly competent to do the proposed work that the employer can properly put him to work, supervised by some one in the establishment.

In putting disabled men back into industry, there is no room for the spectacular. Our soldiers will go the limit in their military life and we will go the limit in appreciation and care of the injured. Until now, however, and apparently in prospect also, re-education means, and can mean, only the kind of industrial training that is always given in educationally intelligent countries to all workers who need it, with only a little more intensive personal consideration of the capacities and limitations of the pupil. Existing facilities for

industrial training may need to be greatly increased because of returning soldiers, but they need to be increased anyway, because America has only begun to provide facilities for the industrial training of her working people. The development of existing facilities along the usual lines will enable these extensions to serve perfectly in later peace times.

The life of a wounded soldier or sailor returned to industry will be pretty much what he himself makes it. If he takes it up with the energy and decision that carried him through battle, he will come through in a way entirely satisfying and gratifying to himself. The results will be commensurate with his own efforts. The man who finds and loves his work will be bountifully repaid.

For the needs of industrial production, to pay for the immense indebtedness of the nation, to carry out the developments of peace, the country will require not only the men who went to war but new hands to take the place of those gone forever. To expand beyond the pre-war stage will supply occupation for every hand that can be induced to work. When the war is over, business men will be forced to utilize the capabilities of the cripple, trained and untrained, and of the blind. The labor supply will not increase as rapidly as the needs of business.

Bringing the physically unfit and disabled man to an irreducible minimum is a national obligation. In caring for disabled soldiers and sailors, no source of possible benefit to their condition should be left unexhausted. If disabilities make it inadvisable for a man to follow his former employment, he should be fitted for a new occupation by appropriate training.

But of what avail is all this if the injured man is not afforded opportunity adapted to his capabilities? The number and character of industrial opportunities are the determining factor in the success of any effort to rehabilitate disabled men. Unless manufacturers are willing to employ restored and re-educated men; unless it is known how many and what kind can be taken into industrial establishments, the workers will stand idle in the market place.

The problem of the handicapped man is not a new one, for he has been with us for a long time and our records of industrial accidents, even for a year, ought to supply us with enough material for the problem of what to do with them. The matter of rehabilitation of the men disabled in the present war will be a matter of national

concern for at least fifty years. It should be approached soberly, therefore, and with none of the hysteria that attaches to the homecoming of the military hero. It is one thing to welcome back a soldier in uniform and if he is suffering from the effects of wounds to overload him with attentions. When he lays aside the military garb and pursues the path of the civilian, the honors and attentions that have been showered on him are likely to cease.

The United States has resolved that every returned soldier shall have a full opportunity to succeed. When necessary, war cripples must be thoroughly trained in schools and industry, and industrial opportunities must be disclosed for those who need occupation. Jobs must be adapted to them, in order that they may become competitors in every sense with the workers who are whole. Occupations that do not exist must be brought into being. Certain work must be reserved for cripples, and devices must be discovered and adapted that will fit the victims of war back into all the ordinary activities of life.

How work can best be provided and adapted to crippled men is in the long run an individual problem, which must be met and solved by each employer. The attitude of the typical employer is most likely to be this:

"I am first an American, a patriot, and willing to do my share in every national duty. I will privately aid these men in every way possible; but I am also a manufacturer with economic responsibilities to my stockholders, employes and others and as such I cannot consider these men for employment unless I am convinced it is a sound business proposition."

The bulk of the evidence at hand proves that the restoration of the crippled soldier to industry can be carefully worked out, so that it will represent a sound business proposition for the employer, a fair opportunity for the wounded worker, and an economic advantage to the community.

The two most important phases of the question, so far as manufacturers are concerned are: First, how much and what form of coöperation can be expected of the employer? Second, what must be the contribution of the disabled worker?

As to what lines of industry hold possibilities, letters from executives give assurance of openings in a surprisingly large number of industries. As a general rule, it may be stated that industries requiring great strength and endurance, rather than skill, hold fewer opportunities than those where the processes are duplicated and skill in operating machines is essential. In industries having numerous power processes, it has been found that almost any machine at which the operator can sit, can be run by a workman who has lost one or both legs.

Particular study is needed in each particular plant to find out

where men can best be fitted in. In this respect, every manufacturer can be of great assistance, simply by telling other manufacturers of any means he may devise for employing a man who has lost any of his members. A manufacturer may discover a way of employing crippled soldiers not known to other manufacturers, and nothing can be more patriotic than passing on the information. Many have already shown a keen interest and deep appreciation of the problem by giving to the National Association of Manufacturers detailed information about places within their processes in which disabled men could be utilized. A digest of letters received reveals a wide range of opportunities and these comprise but a partial list.

FIELDS OPEN TO THE DISABLED

In the clerical field are undoubtedly the greatest number of openings. Unlimited places are offered in the shipping, receiving and bookkeeping departments of almost every factory. Stenography and typewriting likewise hold possibilities, particularly for the blind. In France, numerous blind soldiers have been trained to take dictation on a special machine, and they transcribe their notes rapidly and accurately. Clerical work, of course, requires that the injured man possess a certain grade of intelligence and general education, and when either is lacking, the task of placing him in industry becomes more difficult. Obviously we cannot turn all our injured soldiers into the clerical field. The great majority will by natural inclination and training return to factory work.

Machinery building firms state that they have numerous opportunities, and almost all the prominent automobile manufacturers make similar expressions. One great automobile plant has stated that at present it has in its employ 1,500 more or less disabled men, and out of these, almost 300 are suffering from the loss of either hands or legs; these crippled men, when placed in work that is properly adapted to them are found just as efficient as the other workers, showing that the crippled worker can hold his own with his fellowmen, if placed in the right surroundings. This may almost be taken as a general rule for all industries in which the crippled worker is to be utilized.

Representative boiler-making firms state that in their engine rooms and machine shops, men with but one leg can be utilized, while from tool makers, shoe manufacturers, who state that they

can utilize one legged workers as edge trimmers, etc., hook and eye manufacturers, clothiers and hatters, metal novelty firms and even from iron foundries and machine shops, comes the same opinion. Manufacturers of various accessories such as spark plugs, electrical goods, telephone equipment, porcelain specialties, etc., also offer openings in their plants.

In the plate glass industry, a workman suffering the loss of a leg can be used to much greater advantage than one with the loss of an arm, although the latter can also be utilized. A phonograph company states that unquestionably it will have places where men who might be disabled by the loss of a leg can be used, and this opinion has also been voiced by a multigraph firm, by the wire and cable industry, the machine building industry and by numerous metal firms. In the underwear industry many firms have offered to take disabled men, and one even offered to employ them up to one-sixth of their operating force.

A cooperage plant in Ohio offers to take at least five men, and several tanneries have made similar offers. A watch case firm in Philadelphia states that in this industry a considerable number of people can be employed on operations that are performed entirely with the worker sitting. Piano manufacturers and paper companies make the same statement.

It is the general opinion that on account of the heavy nature of the iron and steel industry, few openings are possible for the crippled worker; but a large steel corporation in Chester, Pa., announces that it will be willing to take from eighteen to twenty disabled men, and a New Jersey iron worker makes the same offer. A Detroit steel casting company announces that in the core room a considerable number of these workers could be employed, as all the materials are brought to and taken away from the men. A large stove manufacturer in Milwaukee is confident that he can utilize at least 100 such workers in his business.

The printing industry undoubtedly holds many opportunities, for many of the smaller machines, particularly in the composing room, can be operated while the worker is sitting. A man familiar with linotype composition work, who might be blinded, may easily manage the keyboard by the touch system.

In the list of industries holding opportunities for the men crippled in their lower limbs, the positions named are almost en-

tirely in the regular processes of the work; but it must be remembered that in almost every factory, no matter in what line, there are numerous odd jobs requiring both intelligence and skill which are particularly suitable for disabled men. These include such positions as gatemen, carpenters, watchmen, inspectors, shipping and receiving clerks, elevator men, etc., and one factory announces that it is particularly ready to coöperate in this work because its employment manager and safety engineer are both cripples. Any factory preparing to give employment on a large scale to crippled men who would have to be taught in the plant, could do no better than to have a crippled man as teacher of the various processes, because his knowledge of the worker's limitations, as well as of the work to be taught, will give him a peculiar sympathy and tact in dealing with a difficult subject.

In the foregoing, the opportunities have been noted principally for men who have the use of both arms, yet many men suffering from the loss of arms will have to be replaced in industry. At first sight the task seems hopeless, but correspondence with various firms who either employ or are willing to employ such cripples, shows that the places are much more numerous than would at first be expected.

A manufacturer of band saw machinery in Michigan announces that one of his employes who lost an arm some years ago earns as good wages as if he had two. A silicate book slate company which employs only eighteen men is willing to take three or four who lose either an arm or a leg, while a furniture company offers to take twenty-five similarly crippled. The lumber industry seems to offer numerous possibilities in this line, and many firms, notable among them a Chicago company, offered to take a number of workers who have one good arm.

For men so disabled, the chemical industry is particularly inviting, for the large number of processes which require little manual labor but careful watching, make it possible to employ a man lacking both arms, and one chemical firm in Maryland has offered to take fifteen such men and train them to watch processes. An Ohio chemical firm makes a similar offer, and I believe that these replies may be taken as an index of the general condition of the industry. Another offer for men with one arm gone comes from a wheel manufacturer, and is followed by one from a maker of wire nails, who

says that he could use the crippled men to pack the nails in small boxes.

Another industry from which are received several offers of positions for one-armed men, is cement manufacturing, and one firm undertakes to take five such men in each of its three factories, to supervise the operation of machinery. Another cement firm offers to use a man with but one good arm in sorting and inspecting returned sacks which have been used to carry the product. A Pennsylvania manufacturer in packing materials says he can use eight men with but one good arm, and he further states that he saw a man with two artificial arms and hands perfectly able to feed himself.

One offer comes from a manufacturer of automatic knitting machines, in which he states that from ten to fifteen cripples suffering from the loss of one or both legs could be used. In the knit goods industry several firms have offered opportunities, and as many of the machines can be tended by the operator sitting down, many such places can be filled by returned soldiers. Of course, fine weaving, beaming and winding cannot be performed by anyone suffering from the loss of his fingers or a hand; but there are numerous other processes in which undoubtedly such injured men can be fitted in. A clothing firm which manufactures shirts, overalls, underwear and kindred lines, states that it is possible for it to use a number of men who have lost either an arm or a leg, while a most interesting letter from a silk manufacturer in Philadelphia states that one of his most efficient workers is lacking an arm, and is now employed to advantage in the distribution of filling yarn to the weavers. This is an excellent illustration of adapting work to the man's injury, and one that can well be followed in other lines.

In addition to the examples cited which have been brought to my personal attention through contact with American manufacturers, I have learned from English authorities of numerous industrial opportunities which they have discovered through their own experience. One possibility of employing returned soldiers is as attendants at electricity sub-stations, especially the smaller ones, of which there are a considerable number in the United States. It has been found in England that the work can be done by men with one leg as long as they can stand for at least two hours at a stretch. Men who have lost one eye can also be employed, provided the

sight of the other eye is normal. At a few stations men who have lost either arm can be used, provided there is no heavy-running machinery.

Another line of employment which English authorities have developed for their returned soldiers is in motion picture theatres, where the men can be employed as operators, door keepers and attendants. The operators and operators' assistants require the use of both arms and all fingers, but men who have lost one or both legs can be employed. The door keepers and attendants can be men with but one arm or those not strong enough for any heavy work.

English authorities give additional information about the leather goods trade, which they have found holds numerous opportunities for the disabled in the manufacture of hand sewn boots, shoe making and shoe repairing.

Tailoring is also another industry in which they have found numerous openings. There are also the various departments of the furniture trade. These last include machine work such as sawing, planing, molding, boring, jointing, dove-tailing and sand papering, which machines can be operated by men with one or both legs gone provided they are suitably equipped with artificial limbs. Polishing furniture and upholstery have offered opportunities to men with but one arm.

There is another class of workers to be cared for—the partially or totally blind. So much is being done for this one class that the manufacturer need concern himself very little about their problems. But it is interesting to note, as already stated, that in France they have been employed with great success as stenographers and typists, and an electrical manufacturer in the United States has discovered that they can be employed with great success in winding armatures. These are but two possible lines which have been developed, and undoubtedly with the many agencies now handling the work, further opportunities will be discovered.

These illustrations have been taken more or less at random, to prove that no industry is entirely closed to these workers if the manufacturer will but look around his plant in a careful manner and with due consideration to the injury of the worker. He will find that numberless places present themselves, and I believe that our crippled workers will appreciate the opportunities offered and prove themselves worthy of them.

It has been the experience of firms already employing disabled men that they are so keenly appreciative of the opportunity offered, that their spirit of willingness more than makes up for the disability. Several of our correspondents who have cripples in their employ have stated this. But it has been most aptly summed up by a New England firm which says that the crippled workers in its employ are so satisfactory, that the writer has often wished that he had more such men.

FACTORS ESSENTIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF THE DISABLED

It is essential that it be impressed upon our disabled men that their spirit and attitude toward their work are the biggest factors in their success. Manufacturers on the whole are ready to give them every opportunity, but the will to make good must be strong in the workers. One firm has summed it up by saying that there is always something a cripple can do, even in the way of pure manual labor; but his value to himself and to his employer depends very largely on his own attitude towards the work. A crippled man in the employ of this firm writes the following, reproduced literally:

I have never had trouble in obtaining work, although the man who has hired me will generally say "You are lame, aren't you?" Most of my work has been clerical, but the last three years I have worked on a milk team, cooked aboard a private yacht and canvassed for mail order houses, besides watchman at the Aero-plane Company. I can lift a good weight, but cannot carry, and can take a hand at most anything. I think after the war is over our maimed soldiers should take account of what they had done and then think out something they think they now can do along in that line and then go after it. Confidence with a fair education are, I think, the things that will aid our men.

The need of employing every available worker will be with us not only this year and next but for far in the future. Employers are glad to take disabled soldiers and sailors into their establishments, and give them training that will enable them to put out a first class product, but they have to keep in mind at all times the necessity of production. Therefore, they do not wish to give disabled men work that, in the language of the day, will "hold them for a while." Many of the physically handicapped who cannot work at the bench and earn the old rates of pay, can, however, apply their proficiency in receiving instructions and imparting them in the supervision of other workers.

In the consideration of the crippled soldier problem, it must be kept in mind that there is little, if any, sentiment in business any more than there is any patriotism in politics. Employers are not in business for their health or for philanthropic motives; they are merely middle men who sell their products for their real worth, and neither the employer nor the employe can get more out of anything than he puts into it. The reward of the workman, therefore, is in accordance with the proficiency and skill which he expends.

The fact that a man is a disabled soldier or sailor is not enough to place him in any systematic manufacturing plant. He must be productive. If he displays any aptitude for training he will be taken in, instructed and paid while learning, and he will be shown that merely average production is expected of him.

Many of the wounded men who return will require no special training, and these naturally will be the first to find their way back into industry. They will be welcomed, for war is teaching us the necessity of conserving and utilizing every ounce of our labor strength. The returned soldier can always find work, for mature men are teachable, and the returned soldier will be so thoroughly in earnest that the instructor will not only be surprised with the rapidity with which he picks up the work, but the accuracy which he can command.

The disabled service man looks forward with joy and anticipation to the day when he will get back to work. There need be no thought of coercion in restoring such men to industry. The suggestion of the surgeon of the early possibility of a wounded soldier taking up his old-time vocation is always gladly accepted.

Manufacturers and employers are interested and satisfied with the well-defined policy that has been laid down by the federal government, through the Smith-Sears act, which places in the hands of the Federal Board for Vocational Education the duty to discharge one great debt of the state to the victims of war. Those requiring training and retraining will participate in the most advanced reconstruction program attempted by any nation.

Every American soldier on the firing line ought to be buoyed up by the consciousness that if he suffers injury, his wounds will be healed, his return home will be expedited, his special occupational ability will be analyzed, his ambition stimulated and every effort will be made to enable him to gain a position of economic independ-

ence. He can feel in his heart that the hardships he undergoes are appreciated, and know that a sincere effort is being made for him.

The men interested in the work of rehabilitating injured soldiers are not restricting their imagination to the present. They are looking forward to a period after the war, when hospital reconstruction and trade re-education will continue, reducing the wastage of civil life and adding to the new spirit of coöperation between capital and labor.

With the field of labor ploughed as it never was before, there may be not merely one job, but ten for every soldier uninjured or disabled. It will take a brave prophet to indicate the condition of the labor market after the war. The provident manufacturer will, however, as far as possible forecast the situation. He will discount the conditions that obtained at the conclusion of the Civil War, when the boundless west extended its arms in its opportunities to the returning soldier; he will realize first of all that the industrial nations, England, France, Russia, and even Germany, whatever the status of this pariah may be—will strain every competitive trade effort; he will bid high for labor; he will rejoice when the old men come back; and to the disabled he will extend not merely sympathy, but opportunity.

The message of the employers of America is this:

To Our Men Who Have Fought the Good Fight:

Every American manufacturer is proud of you, and the splendid spirit you have shown. They want you to feel that they stand ready to coöperate with you in every way that can show appreciation of your sacrifice—both now and after the war.

There are limitless openings in industry for you. Come back to work with the same spirit you have shown in fighting—and you'll make good.

In the long run, success depends on your spirit, and we know that won't fail. You have had a chance to show your mettle "Over There"—and you have lived up to the opportunity. Come back with the same determination to be an independent, self-supporting member of the community, and the American manufacturer will see that you have every opportunity to realize your ambition.